

05/19/09 - An Adoption Pregnancy



When one chooses to adopt they are forgoing the dream of a physical pregnancy but that does not mean that they have to give up the dream of a pregnancy all together. Sure they won't have morning sickness, an expanding belly or push something the size of a watermelon out of them. They will have other ways to experience their pregnancy through research, paperwork, waiting and having faith that they will hold their child in their arms.

Preconception

For a woman who knows she will become pregnant the old fashioned way, she may get her body ready for pregnancy. Perhaps she'll watch what she eats, monitor her cycle or take a prenatal vitamin. For the adoptive couple, this stage is when they are researching, researching and researching about adoption. They are trying to wrap their minds around the adoption lingo and figuring out the best route of adoption for them.

Reading books, attending adoption support meetings, talking to adoptive parents and reading articles online are daily tasks for couples in this stage. They must research to find the correct adoption agency, program, or lawyer that they believe will bring them their child.

Just as come couples can take a long time trying to conceive, adoptive couples can

take a long time in this stage too. In the Adoption Support Group that I lead, I have seen some couples decide within a few weeks where and with whom they are going to adopt. Others have researched for over a year before they found the right place for them to adopt from.

Conception

The couple that gets a positive on a home pregnancy test could very well pinpoint what magical night it was that they conceived their new baby. The adoptive couple will not have that "magical night" for this conception. I personally think of the adoption conception as a long process which includes filling out the inches thick of paperwork, completing the home study, and creating adoption profiles if applicable.

When the final piece of paperwork is delivered to the agency or lawyer by the adoptive couple is what I consider their "Conception Date?". This is because it is from this day forth that they are expectant parents, just as the couple who got the positive home pregnancy test. When an adoptive couple begins their official wait for their child, usually they are overwhelmed with great joy and relief. Because of this, some couples have told me that they have taken pictures of themselves dropping their final piece of adoption paperwork in the mail because this is such a special and happy day.

Pregnancy

The woman with a new life growing within her belly knows that her gestation will be around nine months. During that time she and her partner can prepare for the baby by reading baby care books, have baby showers, tell everyone they know about their upcoming child and know approximately by the due date when they will meet their new child.

This stage can be the hardest for the adoptive couple. This is mainly because they don't know how long their "gestation" will last. If they are pursuing an international adoption, they could have an approximate time line of the process of the child's birth county. It still doesn't mean it couldn't change due to new adoption regulations or a change in government in the child's birth country.

If the couple is pursuing a domestic adoption then they are waiting to be selected by potential Birthparents. This could take anywhere from weeks to years to be selected due to the agency, how open to situations the adoptive couple is, or just because of a reason that no one will ever know. It's very frustrating for the waiting couple to not know why they aren't being chosen to be parents yet.

Not knowing how long their adoptive "pregnancy" will take can be very difficult emotionally. Should they get the baby nursery ready or wait? Is it OK to allow friends to throw them a baby shower? Can they tell people about the adoption without being asked, "Have you heard anything yet?" every few days?

There are no clear answers to any dilemmas that arise during this time. My advice is for people to do whatever feels right for them. Just because Susie had fun registering at the baby store and decorating her baby's room before she adopted doesn't mean you have to. There is no need to follow in Barb's footsteps and register in Mandarin language classes and learn Chinese meals if you know you won't be traveling for two more years. If you were physically pregnant you wouldn't want people telling you what you "should" be doing. Why should it be any different just because you are adopting?

Keeping faith in the adoption process is very trying for an adoptive couple when their "pregnancy" wait has been much longer than expected. They may lose faith and begin to believe that they will never be able to adopt a child. This is the most important time that they must remind themselves that they ARE expectant parents. That means they absolutely will be parenting a child in the future. I truly believe that each child through adoption ends up with the parents who were always meant to be

theirs. Sometimes it just takes a tad longer for this child to find them.

Delivery

After a woman has carried a baby in utero for approximately nine months she usually experiences a quick, slow or textbook delivery for her child. I believe the delivery stage for the adoptive couple can also be fast, slow or textbook. This ?delivery? begins once they are matched with a potential Birthmother or with a child and ends when the child is in their arms.

Two of my adoptions are what I consider fast ?deliveries.? We received a phone call for each saying that a baby had already been born, we were chosen to be her or his parents and to come pick them up. Those situations don?t happen too often just as a woman who has a baby pop out after only two or three pushes doesn?t happen very often.

An example of a slow ?delivery? would be if an adoptive couple was matched with a potential Birthmother who was only three months pregnant. There would be a lot of waiting until the child arrived similar to the stories you hear of women who were in active labor for 20 hours before delivering their baby.

A textbook ?delivery? is seen mainly with international adoptions. Once you receive a referral for a child, you are usually given a time line for when you will travel to meet and possibly bring home your new child. These textbook deliveries are the ones Obstetricians love because the woman during labor progresses as predicted and there are no surprises.

So what happens if the adoptive couple unfortunately experiences a failed adoption where the potential Birthparents decide to parent or the country of the child?s birth

denies the adoption? In this context I would compare these horrible situations to a false labor. You thought it was the time for delivery but alas it was not. The only thing to do is to wait longer until it's time for the real deal.

After Delivery

The good news is that once the child is finally in his or her parents' arms, there is no emotional difference between the couple who physically conceived, carried and delivered a child and a couple who researched, filled out paperwork and waited to be blessed with a child to adopt. Both couples get to experience the joy of new parenthood in the same way. Just as a couple who just delivered a baby would not question that their baby is theirs, the adoptive couple would not question that the child they adopted was meant to be theirs all along.

There is a saying in the adoption community that I believe sums up this adoption pregnancy quite nicely: "Adoption means a child grew in her Mother's heart, not under it."

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